

# The Obesity Epidemic and Massachusetts **Students**



# What is the problem?

The 2009 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicates that among high schools students1:

## **Obesity and Overweight**

**25%** were either overweight or obese (11% obese).

## **Unhealthy Dietary Behaviors**

- 86% ate fewer than 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day<sup>2</sup>.
- 25% reported drinking at least 1 can or glass of soda per day<sup>2</sup>.
- **64%** skipped breakfast on some days<sup>2</sup>.

## **Physical Inactivity**

- 66% of high school students and 67% of middle school students did not meet the recommended levels of physical activity (60 minutes per day) on at least 5 days per week2.
- 41% did not attend physical education during an average school week, and **82%** did not have daily physical education.
- 35% had not been taught how to follow a personal fitness plan in school.
- 41% had not played on any sports teams in the past 12 months.
- 66% of high school students and 58% of middle school students did not walk or bike to school2.
- 30% watched 3 or more hours of television on an average school day. (CDC recommends no more than 2 hours of non-school media time per day.)
- 30% played video games or used the Internet for non-school activities for 3 or more hours on an average school day.

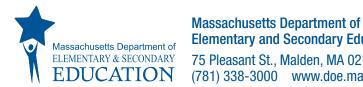
<sup>1</sup>The 2009 MA YRBS is the source of information except where noted. Middle school information is from the 2009 MA Youth Health Survey. 2In the week before the survey.



# What are the solutions?

Kids must be healthy to learn, but they must also learn to be healthy.

- High Quality Health and Physical Education
- Healthy Food Choices
- Strong Physical **Activity Programs**







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# What is the status of school health programs?

The 2008 Massachusetts School Health Profiles indicates that among secondary schools (middle & high schools):

### **Health Education**

- **18%** did not require any health education course.
- 21% did not have a written curriculum for health education, and 36% did not have plans for how to assess student performance.
- **21%** did not have a lead health education teacher with Massachusetts certification to teach health education.

### Physical Education and Physical Activity

- 4% did not require a physical education course in any grade of the school, and 25% did not require physical education in all grades.
- 27% allowed students to be exempted from physical education for participation in sports, other courses, or activities.
- 24% did not administer a physical fitness test to students in any grade in the past year. Of those that had, 66% never sent results of fitness tests home to parents, and 71% never shared aggregate fitness scores with school administration.
- 13% did not have a written curriculum for physical education, and15% did not have plans for how to assess student performance.
- **59%** did not have a policy prohibiting or discouraging the use of physical activity as punishment.

#### **Nutrition Environment**

- 43% allowed the sale of less nutritious foods and beverages (e.g., candy, soda, cookies) outside the school food service program.
- **84%** did not always offer fruits or non-fried vegetables in vending machines, school stores, canteens, snackbars, and during celebrations when foods and beverages were offered.
- **30%** allowed advertising of candy, fast food restaurants, or soft drinks.



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